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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY G, 57TH INFANTRY (P.S.)  
(PHILIPPINE DIVISION) ON LUZON, 7 DECEMBER 1941--30 JANUARY 1942  
(PHILIPPINE ISLAND CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: COMPANY IN DEFENSE

Captain Harry J. Stempin, Infantry

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INTRODUCTION

The data for the compilation of this report has been gathered from the following sources:

- a. Notes from officers while Prisoners of War.
- b. Notes from the company commander's notebook.

The notebook has been partly confiscated when the company commander was taken Prisoner of War. The remaining part was on his person during the Bataan Death March and later during a greater part of his internment. The notebook was buried at the Cabanatuan Prisoner of War Camp, Luzon, and recovered by Major Cary L. Picotte when the United States Rangers rescued the Prisoners of War from Cabanatuan in early 1945.

- c. Books and pamphlets.

The books and pamphlets in my Bibliography were mainly used to refresh my memory on dates and incidents.

This monograph covers the operations of Company G, 57th Infantry, Philippine Scouts (Philippine Division) on Luzon, from the time of Pearl Harbor incident, 7 December 1941, to the time when the company withdrew to the Bataan reserve battle position.

The Philippine Division was the only United States Division in the Philippines at the outbreak of hostilities. It was organized of Philippine Scouts, who were a component of the United States Regular Army, and American troops. The division was composed of the 31st Infantry, American troops, 45th Infantry (Philippine Scouts), 57th Infantry (Philippine Scouts), 23d and 24th Field Artillery (Philippine Scouts), 26th Cavalry (Philippine Scouts), 12th Quartermaster Battalion (Philippine Scouts), 12th Medical Battalion (Philippine Scouts), 12th Signal Company

(Philippine Scouts), 14th Engineer Regiment (Philippine Scouts), and an MP Detachment of Philippine Scouts and American troops. (1)

The 57th Infantry (Philippine Scouts) was about 55 per cent of Tables of Organization strength in officers and 95 per cent in enlisted men. The authorized strength was 114 officers and 2162 enlisted men; the actual strength was about 63 officers and 2054 enlisted men. The regiment was called upon to furnish officers and cadres of noncommissioned officers to train the Philippine Army. These officers and noncommissioned officers were on detached service. In the first few months of 1941, the authorized enlisted strength was expanded from 1100. Recruiting was on a highly selective basis, with the results that the general caliber of our recruits was high. The training of the 57th Infantry had been intensified in order to bring the state of training of the newly enlisted recruits up to standard. (2)

Since nearly all company commanders had gone to the Philippine Army as instructors, the companies of the regiment were commanded by young officers with little experience. The company commander of Company G was a young 2d Lieutenant, Officers Reserve Corps, who was called to active duty May 1941 and two weeks later sailed for the Philippine Islands. He was immediately assigned to the 57th Infantry and in September 1941 was given command of Company G.

At the outbreak of hostilities the strength of Company G, 57th Infantry, was one officer and 130 enlisted men. The company was organized into 4 platoons, 3 rifle platoons of 3 squads each, and 1 weapons platoon.

Riflemen were armed with the M-1 rifle. Each squad had one BAR (9 per company) and the weapons platoon had 4 heavy machine guns and 3 new 60-mm mortars. No ammunition for the 60-mm mortars was ever issued to the company. The organic transportation consisted of one 3/4-ton truck (weapons carrier). The communications equipment, whenever needed, was furnished by the battalion.

(1) A-2; (2) A-3.

Company G was engaged in intensive training and preparations for any eventuality or emergency, and was as ready for war as was possible with the means available. (3)

#### BEGINNING OF HOSTILITIES

##### 8 December 1941:

The company was alerted at 0630 hours and informed that "Hostilities have commenced by air attack on Pearl Harbor and a state of war exists between the United States and the Japanese Empire". (4) 2d Lieutenant Harry J. Stempin was in command of the company. The battalion commander was Lt Colonel Frank E. Brokaw, and the battalion executive officer was Major Robert Scholes. Company G, after three hours of preparation, moved, with full field equipment, into a position near the barrio Guadalupe about two miles northeast of Nichols Field. The company immediately dug in expecting an aerial attack on Nichols Field. That afternoon each man was issued a gas mask in a sealed container, was ordered to break the seal, and carry the mask with him 24 hours a day.

##### 9 December 1941:

At 0300 hours, Nichols Field was heavily bombed by high flying Japanese bombers. The attack so surprised and startled the men that they immediately fired their rifles and machine guns in the direction of the Japanese bombers. The attacking planes were plainly visible in the moonlight. 2d Lieutenant Paul Shure joined the company.

##### 10 December 1941:

At break of dawn, the entire company opened fire at a low flying American plane. The plane was returning from an attack mission on an enemy landing force south of Vigan and was mistaken for a Japanese plane. The pilot bailed out and landed safely - but with three bullet wounds in his legs.

At 1300 hours, Company G was ordered to proceed to Arayat, Pampanga, to capture reported Japanese paratroopers. (5) Three commercial busses

(3) A-1, p. 13; (4) A-6; (5) A-3.

were provided for the movement. These busses were later assigned to the company and used for all future movements. At 1530, the company moved out. On arrival at Arayat, the report was proved to be false. Orders immediately were issued to move to San Fernando, Pampanga, and the company commander was to meet the battalion commander at the public square for further instructions.

At 0130 hours, the company commanders of the 2d Battalion assembled, and orders were received to occupy the Guagua-Porac position - the 2d Battalion on the left near Porac - Company E on the left, Company G on the right, and Company F in reserve. The companies to be in position before day break.

The terrain was totally unfamiliar to the American officers and a Socony Gas and Oil Company road map was the only map available.

12 December 1941:

Company G moved into position just before day break. No definite mission was assigned at this time. Provisions for local security were taken and training of personnel in concealment against aerial observation was conducted.

Official information was received that the United States had declared war on the Japanese Empire.

13 December 1941:

Fort William McKinley was bombed. This caused considerable anxiety on the enlisted men because many had families in barrios near the post. Sergeant Beareares, 1st Sergeant of Company G, whose wife was expecting her eighth child, was extremely worried. He was the only man given permission to see his wife and inquire of the other men's families. He was to report back in 24 hours.

14-22 December 1941:

The company was warned that it might be ordered to occupy a defensive position further north. The enemy, superior in numbers and equipment, was steadily pushing south after its initial landing.

A great part of the company records, unnecessary equipment, and personal possessions were stored at the Porac municipal building so that the men could travel very light.

23 December 1941:

Enemy air activity increased in intensity. USAFFE (United States Armed Forces of the Far East) Headquarters announced the decision to put WFO-3 (approved War Department plan for defense of Manila) into effect. This called for all forces to withdraw into Bataan. (6)

24 December 1941:

The 2d Battalion occupied a position astride Highway 3, north of Angeles, with the mission of covering the withdrawal of the South Luzon Force into Bataan - Company E on the right, Company F on the left, and Company G in a reserve position in Angeles.

25 December 1941:

Christmas Day the men spent in preparing the defensive position on the north city limits. The company commander spent the morning in reconnaissance of the battalion area formulating counterattack plans. At 1100 hours, terrific explosions were heard from the direction of Fort Stotsenberg. It was soon learned that Fort Stotsenberg, with huge piles of food and equipment, was abandoned and the gasoline and oil storage tanks were being demolished before the fast moving enemy. Company G was notified of the huge supply of food and Post Exchange supplies. No time was lost in salvaging some of the supplies. It all turned out that each man in the company received some gift - men's or women's wrist watches, women's underclothing, doilies, table cloths, perfumes, jewelry, Ronson cigarette lighters, etc., and, of course, candy, soap, shaving equipment and toilet articles. The most important supplies were cases of canned food and carcasses of frozen beef. The decision of salvaging this food proved itself justified one hundred fold when the men were placed on one-half rations. The company always had a little extra food which was issued when the men were heavily engaged.

(6) A-7.



Men were worried about their families, but the morale and esprit de corps were very high.

Manila was declared an open city. (7)

26-30 December 1941:

The days were spent in preparing the delaying position in order to carry out the assigned mission.

Information was received that Japs were employing tanks. Since the company had no antitank weapons, it was necessary to improvise the "Molotov Cocktail". The Molotov Cocktail was a beer bottle filled with gasoline and wrapped in rags. Just before use, the rags were dipped in gasoline, ignited, and heaved with force at the rear of the enemy tank. The bottle was to break and set the enemy tank on fire.

30 December 1941:

The 2d Battalion, 57th Infantry, was ordered to withdraw to the Abucay position in Bataan and occupy the regimental reserve line 600 yards north of the town. (8) The withdrawal was at night and had to be completed before day break. The battalion commander, Lt Colonel Frank Brokaw, was to meet the company at Samal to issue further orders.

Company G was the last company to withdraw and the first company to arrive at Samal. It was immediately ordered to establish the regimental outpost line of resistance along Samal River.

31 December 1941:

After an all night move, Company G began to organize the outpost line of resistance. As soon as the men finished their hot meal, the company commander was called to the battalion command post to receive orders to move immediately to Layac Junction. The 2d Battalion was detached and assigned to a provisional combat team. This combat team, 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry, American troops, and 2d Battalion, 57th Infantry, Philippine Scouts, was ordered to serve as a delaying force at Layac Junction. (9) No time was lost in preparing the delaying position. The Japanese planes were constantly overhead and spasmodically dropping

(7) A-1, p. 34; (8), A-3; (9) A-2.

bombs here and there in front of the position. This, of course, gave the tired troops an incentive to dig before falling asleep.

1 January 1942:

The Layac Junction position was improved. Civilians, with their meager belongings, were evacuated to the mountains and 5th Columnist routed.

Enemy air activity intensified.

THE MAIN ACTION

2 January 1942:

A battalion of Philippine Army relieved Company G, 57th Infantry. The company now moved into the assigned regimental reserve line in Abucay. The mission was to protect the right coastal flank, the rear, and give air protection for the rear installations of the regiment. The only battalion 50 caliber machine gun was assigned to G Company for defense against hostile aircraft.

Company F was assigned the left sector, Company E the right sector, and Company G in reserve northeast of Abucay.

3 January 1942:

Regimental reserve position prepared.

In the afternoon, Lieutenant Stempin was called to the battalion command post at Abucay and given the following orders: "Company G will organize the Regimental O.P.L.R. south of Samal with two platoons and one section of machine guns. Lieutenant Shure will be in command of the O.P.L.R. The company commander will organize a straggler line along the north-south main road in order to direct all stragglers off the main road and into an area 1000 yards west of the river ford on the Abucay Hacienda Trail (see map). This to be carried out without disregarding the company's primary mission of protecting the regimental right coastal flank, rear, and giving protection against enemy aircraft."

Two squads were assigned to the stragglers' line, one-half squad to establish a security post at the mouth of Abucay Creek, the other half squad

to establish a security post along the coast, 300 yards north of Abucay. One section of machine guns and Company Headquarters were in position east of Abucay.

4 January 1942:

The company went on half rations - two meals a day. (10)

5 January 1942:

Men improved the rear defensive installations, constructing barbed wire entanglements and installing booby traps.

The outpost was well organized under the leadership of Lieutenant Shure.

6 January 1942:

The enemy attacked Layac Junction position. Pressure increased steadily all day. At 2200 hours, troops began to withdraw along the main road, through the O.P.L.R., the M.R., R.R.L., and were directed into a pre-arranged assembly area. (11)

7 January 1942:

All stragglers routed.

The friendly troops were now withdrawn behind the main line of defense. The O.P.L.R. was exposed to the enemy. This concluded the second phase of the Philippine Campaign, "The Withdrawal to Bataan". (12)

CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

8 January 1942:

Air activity intensified, and as a result Company G suffered the first casualty, this along the straggler line south of Abucay.

The O.P.L.R. reported first contact with the Japanese. An enemy patrol of seven men were killed (see map).

9 January 1942:

More enemy troops contacted the outpost and started developing the battle line preparatory to attack. The outpost directed devastating artillery fire on the Jap assembly areas, and annihilated three enemy reconnaissance patrols.

(10) A-3; (11) A-1, p. 43; (12) A-2.

10 January 1942:

The O.P.L.R. engaged the enemy three-four times and finally withdrew.

11 January 1942:

In compliance with orders, Lieutenant Shure with his two platoons and one section of machine guns moved back to establish an OPLR along Calaguiman River.

At about 1500 hours, enemy concentrated their artillery fire on Abucay. The company position, in Abucay, was subjected to heavy enemy battery and dive bomber attack, and the Abucay position was abandoned. The town became a mass of flames. The dive bombers, spotting our men escaping toward the fish pond dikes, swooped down, strafed and bombed them for twenty minutes. Company G suffered three casualties. Civilians who refused to leave their homes on the dikes suffered very heavily - about 60 per cent were casualties.

At 1800 hours, the company commander, in compliance with previous orders from the battalion commander, assembled all Company G men about the Abucay area and moved forward to relieve the OPLR in order to give Lieutenant Shure and his men a rest. The company commander with one platoon and one section of machine guns, plus one squad of Company E and one squad of Company F, moved into position about 2200 hours. Immediately a message was sent to the regimental headquarters that the enemy, estimated at two companies, was crossing Calaguiman River on our left flank. The message was sent by runner because no other communication was available.

12 January 1942:

At 0100 a small group of Japanese had filtered through into the rear of the OPLR. They caused a good deal of trouble and confusion with the OPLR and the MLR. The main line opened fire. At day break a number of Japanese dead was found on and behind the OPLR. The left of the regimental main line of resistance was pushed back, but it was quickly restored. At 1000 hours, it was apparent that Japanese were again initiating an attack because of the heavy knee mortar fire on Calaguiman. At 1130 hours, Captain Arthur Wermuth

came with orders from Regiment "to withdraw the OPLR immediately. The town will be set on fire and artillery concentration placed on it as soon as a large cloud of smoke is observed by our forward artillery observer. Get out fast."

The men moved out quickly, but under great difficulty, because the only prearranged route of withdrawal was mined. It was necessary to use the center of the main road. This drew a great volley of enemy flanking fire.

At 1500, the company was reunited and reorganized in rear of Abucay.

Late evening, orders were received that Company G, after a powerful artillery preparation, will counterattack with fixed bayonets at 0500 hours. The orders were changed and one platoon plus one section of machine guns were sent to organize a perimeter security around regimental headquarters. Two squads were deployed as outposts at the mouth of Abucay Creek and along the coast.

#### 13 January 1942:

In compliance with new orders from battalion, the company was again reassembled (about 0330 hours) and attached to the 1st Battalion. The mission was to reinforce and protect the left flank of the 1st Battalion, while a counterattack was being effected in the 3d Battalion area in order to restore the salient. Our rolling barrage fell short for a few rounds and inflicted three casualties in Company G.

#### 14-18 January 1942:

The Japs launched furious night attacks in an attempt to penetrate the main line. Each attack was repulsed with heavy enemy losses. The enemy changed to infiltration tactics and considerable difficulties were experienced in cleaning out snipers, hidden in rear of our lines, with apparent mission to snipe American officers only. (13)

1st Lieutenant Alexander R. Nininger of the 1st Battalion saw need for vigorous action and went out to clear an area of snipers. He was killed and received the first posthumous award of the Congressional Medal of Honor. (14)

(13) A-2; (14) A-3, p. 3.

23 January 1942:

Orders were received to prepare to withdraw to the Reserve Battle Position.

THE WITHDRAWAL

24 January 1942:

At 1800 hours, the 2d Battalion began the withdrawal to an intermediate position just west of Balanga.

25 January 1942:

Initial orders to the company prescribed the occupation of a position on the Reserve Battle Position on the Pantingan River. At 2000 hours, while on the move, orders were received directing the company to a bivouac area just north of Limay. (Kilometer Post 143.8) The move was effected before dawn.

26 January 1942:

Orders were received to proceed to another bivouac area on the Mariveles cut-off on the west coast of Bataan.

27 January 1942:

Food shortage was now being felt. The company food reserves acquired at Fort Stotsenberg were practically gone.

28 January 1942:

In the afternoon, the 2d Battalion was ordered to relieve a force consisting of Navy and Marine troops which, for several days, had been unsuccessful in their efforts to destroy an enemy force which had secured a foothold on Longoskawayan Point. (18)

Propaganda leaflets dropped by Japanese planes urged Filipinos to kill their American officers and to surrender, assuring them that they then would be given food, freedom and money, and sent home. (19) The propaganda had no effect on the well-trained and disciplined Philippine Scouts. They fought courageously and were loyal throughout.

This concludes the first seven weeks of the war against the Japanese Empire on a poorly equipped and undermanned outpost of the United States.

(18) A-3, p. 4; (19) A-2

### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The Philippine Scouts performed excellently, considering the trying conditions of equipment and food. Their training and discipline proved of great value during the many critical situations, starvation, and points of physical exhaustion. There is a breaking point in every individual, and it is surprising to see what punishment a human body can take.

There was no reason for consistently keeping the company on edge and always on the move, or changing orders before the old ones were completed. This points to the indecisions on the part of higher commanders or just plain lack of information as to the capabilities and probabilities of the enemy. Whenever the situation became critical, the Philippine Scouts were moved into reserve, but never committed - maybe it was because the higher command did not see fit to commit their best trained troops too soon? But in the long run, the individual soldier took the punishment.

When the company moved into a new position, it was very slow in organizing and establishing the position - this because of inexperienced officers and lack of noncommissioned officers. The company had six non-commissioned officers on detached service with the Philippine Army and no replacements were permitted.

No terrain maps, sketches, or photos were ever furnished the company commander. Very little information was received from the battalion headquarters; therefore, the officers and men were never well informed of the situation. Higher commanders were continuously demanding information but very little came back as intelligence. Confidence in intelligence was lost.

It is practically impossible to have unity of command and control in a small unit when it is so broken and separated as Company G was at Abucay.

The outpost line of resistance was relieved on the night of the main attack. No contact was established with the adjacent unit. The pre-arranged routes of withdrawal were mined by the front line troops without informing the outpost line of resistance. Communication was definitely inadequate, especially when the enemy night attack began. It was by

runner to the main line of resistance and then by telephone to regimental headquarters.

Great ingenuity, initiative, and resourcefulness had to be exercised by the officers and noncommissioned officers because of the enemy's preponderance of equipment and numbers.

The enemy was successful in his attacks because he felt for weak spots in the main line and when he found them, he attacked at night. More and better equipment and, of course, training in defense against night attack would have helped to stop the enemy before he hit the main line.

### LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

1. Small unit commanders should be well informed of situations which directly affect his unit.
2. Without proper equipment, supplies and food, a unit cannot last long against a superior force.
3. A steady flow of information from subordinates to superiors and from superiors to subordinates is necessary for success in battle.
4. Unity of command is sacrificed when a small unit is broken and separated to carry out different missions. Control is very difficult.
5. Enemy will seek the weakest part of a defensive line to attack.
6. A well trained and disciplined soldier can stand a tremendous amount of punishment in adverse situations and still have a high morale and esprit de corps.
7. It is the duty of all leaders to stimulate and cultivate aggressiveness, fearlessness, ingenuity, initiative, and resourcefulness on the part of the individual soldier.
8. Untrained troops should not be employed in critical positions or along side of well trained troops.
9. The character of the terrain exercises a decisive influence on the selection of a defensive position.
10. The organization of a position is limited only by the time and facilities available.



11. Withdrawals are best effected under cover of darkness, especially  
when enemy has air superiority.
12. Exceptional effort, exertion and will power of all men are  
necessary to success in trying conditions.
13. A withdrawal requires strict control and supervision.
14. The price of unpreparedness is very great.